

# North Dakota Best in Class Grant Program

## Grant Announcement & Program Description

### 2022-2023

The North Dakota Department of Human Services (NDDHS) is announcing the *Best in Class* Grant, which is a competitive grant award established by the 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly and codified in NDCC 50-11.1 to serve North Dakota children and families the year before they enter Kindergarten.

The *Best in Class* program builds on program characteristics that drive results – high quality, supported interactions between adults and children based on developmentally appropriate experiences.

Twenty-plus years of research from programs across the country clearly indicates that the positive gains that come from having access to quality early childhood experiences can have a long-lasting effect.

North Dakota's *Best in Class* program represents a targeted state investment in programs that have committed to delivering the highest quality experiences to the children and families they serve, and whose actions can demonstrate the return on investment that is possible with intentional, research-supported investments in early childhood. The work done in these programs will be monitored, evaluated, and supported to help ensure that the investment we make has an impact.

#### Application Process

- As we are preparing for Best in Class 2022-2023 all information about the program will be posted on ND DHS Early Childhood website [Best in Class \(nd.gov\)](https://www.nd.gov/best-in-class)
- Application available at: [Best in Class \(nd.gov\)](https://www.nd.gov/best-in-class)
- Applications may be submitted via email to [dhsec@nd.gov](mailto:dhsec@nd.gov). Applications must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., Monday, May 23rd.
- Tuesday, May 31st the department will make an announcement on [Best in Class \(nd.gov\)](https://www.nd.gov/best-in-class) of the programs selected to participate in the 2022-2023 Best in Class cohort.

#### PROGRAMS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY

North Dakota early childhood programs that have been **operating for more than one year**, participate in quality improvement, and serve children who have reached **age four before August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022** are eligible to apply. This includes

- Programs that are operated by educational facilities, public or private that are committed to completing the Four-Year-Old Program Approval ([SFN 1304](#)) prior to the 2022-2023 grant year.
- Federally funded Head Start programs. If not also licensed by NDDHS, program must have completed the Four-Year-Old Program Approval ([SFN 1304](#)).
- Licensed child care settings (center or group), inclusive of those operated in connection with a church, business, or organization, that are in good licensing standing.

#### NORTH DAKOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEMS

<u>Licensed Child Care</u>	<u>Head Start Grantee</u>	<u>Local Education Agency Public/Private</u>
<p>Licensed child care programs participating in Bright &amp; Early ND, our state's QRIS, with a current rating of Step 3 or 4 and in good licensing standing.</p> <p>NAEYC or NAFCC accredited licensed child care programs participating in Bright &amp; Early ND are eligible with a current rating of Step 2 or higher.</p>	<p>Head Start Grantees in compliance with Federal Head Start Monitoring Protocol.</p>	<p>Local Education Agencies must be in compliance with ND Department of Public Instruction Desk Audit Approval System, in good fiscal standing, and in compliance with all Federal Title Program Monitoring.</p>

### PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

Awarded programs will operate in compliance with the grant requirements and research evaluation criteria. Programs must:

- Operate for a minimum of 400 hours over 32 consecutive weeks. Programs operating at least 832 hours over 32 consecutive weeks are desired. Based on group size, programs operating 400 to 831 hours in at least 32 consecutive weeks will receive half the grant amount.
- Admit children of all learning abilities into their program, that are **4 years old before Aug. 1<sup>st</sup> 2022.**
- Maintain the recommended group size for number of children served per grant award. Programs will have the option of participating as a large 18 (17-20) child group size or small 9 (8-10) child group size.
- Enroll 50% of a program's classroom slots with children whose household income is less than 60% of state median income or children who have an identified developmental delay or disability.
- Charge tuition based on Best in Class Program Sliding Fee Scale (when applicable).
- Comply with current North Dakota requirements related to qualifications, training, and professional development of staff delivering services.
- Adhere to expectations established by NDDHS for coaching, monitoring, fiscal oversight, and data reporting (Teaching Strategies GOLD) and collection.
- Incorporate at least ten hours of research - based family engagement (Ex. Teaching Strategies - Ready Rosie).
- Are willing to admit children who receive child care assistance.
- Communicate program expectations and collect data consent from families.
- Purchase materials and equipment with grant dollars to meet BIC Environment Standards upon completion of an environment self-assessment.
- Utilize Teaching Strategies GOLD for observations and assessment under NDDHS Teaching Strategies license.
- Implement a research-based curriculum. Creative Curriculum is offered to program participants at no cost. Participate in professional development trainings/community of practices.

- Coordinate and/or offer onsite health screenings and referrals (hearing, vision, dental & physical). These must be completed within 90 days from the start of the pre-kindergarten year.
- Participate in programmatic research, including randomized studies that examine core components of program design and program outcomes.

**BEST IN CLASS PROGRAM DESIGN**

**Grant Amount and Eligible Uses**

New Best in Class programs approved with a group size of 18 (17-20) children and operating at least 832 hours are eligible for an annual award of \$120,000; programs approved to operate with a group size of 9 (8-10) children and operating at least 832 hours will receive an annual award of \$60,000. Based on group size, programs operating 400 to 831 hours in at least 32 consecutive weeks will receive half the grant amount.

Grant awards for Best in Class programs from cohort one, 2021-2022 participating in cohort two, 2022-2023 will be tiered based on community status, tuition dependency, and hours of operation.

Each grant award must be matched with cash match or in-kind match contributions equal to 16.6666% of total grant reimbursement.

Grant funds will support the provision of quality early childhood experiences, including expenditures related to staffing, training, equipment, and supplies; as well as supporting families to participate in referral activities that result from screening. Programs request reimbursement on a quarterly basis using SFN 1763.

**Allowable use of funds**

<b>Personnel Costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salary and benefits for teacher and assistant teacher/para</li> <li>• Qualified substitute teachers</li> <li>• Cost of background checks for new teachers</li> </ul>
<b>Health/Screening/Referral Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of vision, hearing, dental, &amp; physical screenings</li> <li>• Gas cards for families to attend referral appointments</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration and Fees</li> </ul>
<b>Education Equipment &amp; Supplies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best in Class required instructional materials and supplies</li> <li>• Classroom furnishings</li> <li>• Classroom electronic/technology equipment (not to exceed 5% of the grant awarded)</li> <li>• Curriculum Costs</li> <li>• Playground equipment and supplies</li> </ul>
<b>Other Operating Expenses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom maintenance and cleaning supplies</li> <li>• Computer support for classroom</li> <li>• Family engagement activities</li> <li>• Safety equipment and supplies</li> <li>• Administrative supplies</li> <li>• Advertising and Outreach</li> <li>• Indirect Cost (not to exceed 10% of the total of all other expenses per reimbursement)</li> </ul>

**Enrollment**

Awarded programs will adhere to program requirements related to selection of children for enrollment in the grantee’s Best in Class group.

Each Best in Class group will establish an enrollment set-aside to assure inclusion of children who are most likely to benefit from the Best in Class program.

- 50% of a program’s classroom slots will be set-aside for children whose household income is less than 60% of state median income or children who have an identified developmental delay or disability.

- Income will be determined utilizing categorical eligibility established via other federal programs (ex. SNAP, CCAP, Free/Reduced Meals) or via documentation provided by the family
- Developmental delay or disability will be determined by utilizing existing eligibility for other federal programs, including receipt of services through an IEP under early childhood special education, eligibility for DD services, or other documentation deemed appropriate by NDDHS.
- If a program has more applicants in the set-aside pool than it has set-aside slots available, students will be selected through a randomized selection process within the set-aside pool.
- Any students not selected in the first-round randomized selection (i.e., set-aside pool) will then be included in the non-set-aside pool.
- Students in the non-set-aside pool will then be selected for enrollment based on a randomized selection protocol.

### **Staffing & Ratio Requirement**

Group Size 18, (17-20) Staffing must include a minimum of two adults – a qualified teacher and an auxiliary teacher – who must always be present. If either staff is absent, the Best in Class program must provide a qualified substitute.

Group Size 9, (8-10) Staffing requires as minimum one qualified teacher – who must always be present. If the teacher is absent, the Best in Class program must provide a qualified substitute.

### **Tuition**

Programs are not required to charge tuition. An awarded Best in Class program can charge tuition to families who participate, if the tuition charged follows the Best in Class Sliding Fee Scale.

- Families with household income of 61% to 100% of state median income will be subject to a maximum tuition charge per child of 3% of household income.
- Families with household income of 100% to 150% of state median income will be subject to a maximum tuition charge per child of 5% of household income.
- Families with household income greater than 150% of state median income will be subject to a maximum tuition charge of 7% of household income, not to exceed the maximum CCAP rate for preschool age.

### **Health screening & referrals**

Best in Class grantees are required to offer on-site screenings and referrals for each child enrolled. Best In Class coaches will help coordinate health screenings as needed. Grant funding may be used to assure screenings are completed. Screenings are to be completed within the first 90 days of Best in Class programming. If the program provided screenings during a recruitment phase or if the child has had a well child visit, programs may monitor to assure screenings happen annually.

Physical Health Screenings. Best in Class grantees must coordinate/offer physical health screening through community partnerships. These screenings must be offered by trained professionals onsite if the family does not have means to access a community provider. Physical screening includes height, weight, blood pressure, and BMI.

Vision and Hearing Screenings. All programs must offer vision and hearing screenings by trained professionals onsite and can choose to partner with a provider in the service area as appropriate.

Oral Health Screenings. All programs must offer dental screenings by trained professionals and can choose to partner with a provider as appropriate in your area. Screenings are not examinations and do not involve making diagnoses that lead to treatment plans. An oral health screening is using a flashlight and small mouth mirror to look for any signs of dental disease.

Developmental Screening. As part of Best in Class, families, in consultation with the awarded program and coach, will complete a developmental screening tool used to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children – paving the way for meaningful next steps in learning, intervention, or monitoring.

### **Family Participation**

Family engagement is a required component of Best in Class. The Best in Class coaches will work with awarded programs to identify a minimum of 10 hours of family engagement opportunities per enrolled child. Family engagement might include:

- *Ready Rosie* at-home strategies tool, through the program’s participation in Teaching Strategies
- *Waterford Upstart* kindergarten readiness program is available in ND at no cost to preschool children
- Other research-based family engagement (SEEDS for learning etc.)

Programs will provide and report additional family engagement opportunities.

### **Materials and Equipment**

- Best in Class requires programs to offer children materials and equipment that support developmentally appropriate hands-on learning experiences. Upon completion of an initial environment self-assessment, coaches will initiate an on-site review of the program classroom, to help develop a plan related to equipment and materials that may be needed to assure that the program is meeting Best in Class Environment Standards.
- Programs will complete the Environment Self-Assessment twice per year.
- Programs will be required to use grant dollars to purchase materials and equipment to meet Best in Class Environment Standards.

### **Curriculum & Assessment**

All programs are required to use Teaching Strategies GOLD, a formative assessment, and will be required to have a subscription under the NDDHS license during the funded year. Year-round programs will have four child outcome checkpoints and all others will have three.

Best in Class programs are also required to use a comprehensive research-based curriculum. Teaching Strategies digital Creative Curriculum will be provided and includes Ready Rosie a family engagement tool.

Professional development will be available on Creative Curriculum and teachers will be trained to implement GOLD assessment and how to use the data to intentionally plan teaching and learning opportunities.

### **Children with Special Needs and Individualized Education Plan**

Best in Class grantees must plan for children with disabilities to ensure that resources are in place in the Best in Class classroom.

Children who are identified as having a disability should receive services and staffing in accordance with their IEP. Best in Class teachers should have a copy or access to all IEPs for the children in their classroom. Teachers should attend all IEP meetings and work directly with the Local Education Agency (LEA) to ensure progress is being made towards meeting IEP goals for any child with a current IEP in place.

**Data Collection**

Awarded programs are required to enroll all students into the North Dakota State Automated Reporting System. Guidance and TA will be provided to support the access and on-going reporting needs of each program.

Best in Class programs will participate in ongoing program study to support long-term child outcomes.

NDDHS will supply awarded programs with information to share with families upon enrollment, that describe the program design, including releases of information.

**PROGRAM SUPPORTS****Coaching**

Best in Class coaches will be supporting teachers in all components of the Best in Class program including, but not limited to, environment and materials, Teaching Strategies curriculum and assessment, family engagement, health screenings and referrals, and coordination of other coaches currently assisting programs. Coaches will provide onsite and virtual communication through observation, reflection, action planning and goal setting.

**Health Consultation**

Best in Class grantees will have quarterly visits (on-site & virtual) with North Dakota Child Care Health & Safety Consultants who are responsible for assessing the health and safety of early childhood facilities, providing training, guidance, and recommendations to support early childhood services providers with preventing and managing injuries and infectious disease.

**Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

All Best in Class grantees will be assigned a monitor to work closely with the program administration, coaches, health consultants and other key program staff to ensure the fiscal, operations, and programming is being implemented with fidelity.